

Crime Lab study finds youth employment program has impact on violent crime arrests

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Mayor of Chicago Rahm Emanuel addresses a group of young men who participated in One Summer Plus program at a news conference, announcing the results of a University of Chicago Crime Lab study of the program. The Crime Lab found that the youth employment program supported by the City of Chicago cut violent crime arrests by 51 percent.

At-risk youth who participated in the 2012 One Summer Plus program experienced a 51 percent drop in arrests for violent crime, according to a new study released from the University of Chicago Crime Lab. City officials are building upon that success by studying the impact of One Summer Plus on participants in 2013 and establishing the model for

future youth programs.

One Summer Plus offers youth from neighborhoods with elevated rates of violent crime with employment opportunities, mentoring and therapy. The drop in violence demonstrates the program's positive impact and its lasting effects, as participants were monitored for nine months after starting the program.

"We are not waiting for our kids to become [victims of violence](#), but instead are reaching out to keep them safe and offer opportunities for learning and employment to address one of the root causes of crime," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Given the results, we hope this program will serve as a model for future youth employment programs in Chicago and nationwide."

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle created the One Summer Chicago program in May 2011 to provide youth with educational, safe [summer](#) activities. In 2012, the program evolved and Mayor Emanuel directed the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services to work with the Crime Lab to design a specialized violence prevention program, One Summer Plus, focusing on youth from neighborhoods with elevated rates of violent crime.

More than 700 youth ages 14-21 were selected to participate in One Summer Plus in 2012 from an open application process available at 13 Chicago public schools located in high-violence and low-income neighborhoods. Applicants faced a number of challenges; the year before they entered the program, they had missed an average of six weeks of school and about 20 percent had been arrested.

"We were fairly confident that One Summer Plus was having a positive impact last summer, because the youth were sharing remarkable stories about their experiences. What we didn't expect was such a dramatic

impact nine months later," said Commissioner Evelyn Diaz of the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. "The results tell us that we're on the right track in terms of program design and we're looking forward to testing that design with a higher risk group of youth this summer."

This summer's Plus program used a similar program design but focused on recruiting a group of participants who face even tougher challenges. Specifically, this year's participants are all young men between 16-24 years old who have had involvement with the criminal justice system.

Crime Lab researchers hope that the new findings help this program to become a model for the rest of the nation. "The evaluation was possible because of Mayor Emanuel's commitment to measuring the impact of violence prevention programs, and his policy to allow researchers unusually extensive access to city data. The city's openness to this kind of rigorous program evaluation enables not just Chicago but cities around the country to learn what is effective and what is cost effective in reducing [violent crime](#) and improving life outcomes for youth," said Roseanna Ander, executive director of the Crime Lab.

"Because we designed the program like a clinical trial in medicine, we were able to collect very convincing evidence that One Summer Plus reduced violence far beyond the summer itself. Summer jobs programs have been federally funded for half a century, but Chicago has now produced some of the first rigorous evidence that they can actually reduce crime," noted Sara Heller, a researcher at Crime Lab and the study's author.

One Summer Plus was the beginning of the City's broader strategy to invest in youth at high risk of violence. Summer 2013 is bringing several brand new summer programs for this population. These include:

- Greencorps Youth Program – Open to youth from specific high schools in high-crime communities, Greencorps provides them with training in horticulture and bicycle repair.
- Youth Working for Success - A youth employment program targeting justice-involved youth that helps them develop skills to bring about positive social change through civic leadership. This program is an outgrowth of NATO's recent Chicago summit and emphasizes NATO's mission of Working Together for Peace and Security.
- Bridges to Pathways Initiative – An intensive six-month transitional jobs pilot for young men recently released from State juvenile detention centers, the program offers online high school education, employment, social, emotional learning/cognitive behavioral therapy, and mentoring to try to help these youth successfully re-enter the community.

Provided by University of Chicago

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